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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 000273

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/16/2019
TAGS: [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [ECPS](#) [PGOV](#) [HO](#)
SUBJECT: ZELAYA SOFTENS RHETORIC ON HONDUTEL SCANDAL

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 263 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, E.O. 12958, Reasons: 1.4(b)
and (d)

¶1. (C) President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya's rhetoric on the Hondutel scandal, following the indictment of Latin Node, Inc. in Miami, has cooled from his initial claims that the U.S. prosecution of Latin Node, Inc. was part of a CIA conspiracy to get him (reftel). The Ambassador talked with President Zelaya several times since the weekend, urging him to drop the conspiratorial rhetoric, to focus on the facts of the case and to launch a Honduran investigation into Honduran participation in this bribery scandal. Our release of a statement saying that President Zelaya was not being investigated by the USG helped reassure him.

¶2. (C) Following our advice, President Zelaya named a committee to investigate the scandal on April 15; the committee includes a representative of Honduras' cardinal, who is well respected and has been outspoken against government corruption. In addition, our DOJ and legal attaches (based in San Salvador) met today with Honduran Attorney General Luis Alberto Rubi, responding to their request for information on the case. The team explained to the Attorney General's staff the proper methods for requesting Legal information from DOJ.

¶3. (C) Comment: On the diplomatic front, our primary goal is to avoid a dispute over what is a legal and judicial manner. Nevertheless, we are encouraging Honduran officials, including the president and attorney general, to pursue a serious investigation of this scandal. We plan to direct our assistance for their investigation through proper legal channels and not/not to publicly involve the Embassy in the Honduran investigation. A prudent management of our legal assistance will seek ensure that the Honduran investigation does not negatively affect the prosecution of Latin Node, Inc. in the U.S.

LLORENS